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ABSTRACT

To alleviate the time lag between the conception and the implementation of educational innovation, the Unit for Dissemination has been formed by the Kentucky Department of Education. Within the goals of fostering awareness and interest in innovation and of spreading innovation from field test to ultimate user, the Unit has defined objectives which include providing communication links, supporting services, technical services, and the coordination of dissemination efforts. In addition to promoting research and development in dissemination and diffusion, the Unit will organize and maintain a program of awareness on both the state and local level for innovative programs that will impact on local school districts. These efforts are seen as critical as the present disproportionate research-to-dissemination funding ratio results in a low-effectiveness as well as an approximately 20-year delay in the implementation of research results. (JVP)

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The Role, Purpose and
Program of the Unit for
Dissemination:
A Position Paper

by
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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND
USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

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CONTENTS

- Section I: Introduction
- Section II: Dissemination and Diffusion and how They Relate to the Role of the Unit
- Section III: Overview of Unit Purpose and Goals
- Section IV: The Dissemination Network
- Section V: The Unit's Structure and Support Functions
- Section VI: Conclusion
- Section VII: References

Section I: Introduction

The dissemination of educational program and practice information has become a frequent topic in the educational literature of the past few years. The explanation for this interest was probably most succinctly stated by Kester and Hull (1973) when they noted that there exists an important failing in education: "Research and development products should be used by the intended clients, but these products are not being used to any great extent."

Cutter (NDG) in her report on dissemination activities conducted by nine state education agencies has even noted the trend:

"Recent years have seen a growing emphasis upon moving ideas, good practices, from their source--the researcher's study or the practitioner's classroom--to other settings where they might be used."

And there is indeed cause for concern over the extent of our use of new educational programs and practices. One indication of the problem is the large time lag generally existing between the development of an innovation and its adoption by educators. Miles (1964), for example, estimated that it took fifteen years for even three percent of the schools to adopt kindergarten programs.* A 1966 study by the National Commission on Technology, Automation, and Economic Progress found that, for twenty inventions, the time lag between invention and adoption was fourteen to twenty-seven years. This time lag situation can justly be viewed from an economic standpoint: if an innovation, or a technology, required a project expenditure of \$500,000, we are talking about a \$500,000 investment.

* And state legislatures are just now authorizing state funds for support of kindergartens, 150 years after its development.

A time lag of 20 years on such an investment means that the cash spent has shown no yield in 20 years. If that \$500,000 has been placed in a bank for 20 years, at a rate of interest of 6.5% per year, we would have a gain of \$1,154,290.41. We might say then that, in dissemination, a time lag could cost the public \$3.31 for every dollar spent.

In short, the time lag record is distressing and Congress is starting to take notice of it. A National Academy of Science study of the impact of vocational education research and development even reported that current dissemination efforts throughout the country are "neither as far reaching nor as concentrated as might be desired . . . dissemination efforts have been hampered and sometimes eliminated . . ." Evidence of the Federal concern for dissemination is even found in the fact that 100 sections of 31 Federal acts deal with dissemination or diffusion.

Compounding the problem is the general increase in the number of innovations to be disseminated. It is impossible to get a true feeling for the immensity of the number of innovations being generated with any one fact, or in any one place, but one measure of innovation production might be the ERIC system which in any one month adds more than 16,000 new documents related to education. If only one-half of these documents are considered useful and if one assumes that each of these will contain only ten items of information which are immediately useful, there are still 860,000 pieces of "good" information added each year in which an educator might be interested.

A teacher, then, who begins teaching at the age of 21 and teaches until retirement at the age of 65 could possibly draw 37,840,000 useful pieces of information from the ERIC file alone

during a working lifetime. The Kentucky State Department of Education Unit for Dissemination can currently draw from 90 ERIC type information files, which means that each and every teacher has available 3,405,600,000 pieces of useful classroom information during a working lifetime.

Many attempts have been made to encourage the adoption of these innovations. One method has been the funding of exemplary programs by federal and state education agencies or by private institutions. A recurrent concern in these efforts is the permanence of the adoption after funding is withdrawn. The result after the program's termination has often been the same, no change, and the loss has been tragic.

It has been estimated that for every \$4,300 spent in the dissemination of information on new educational programs and practices there will be a cost benefit yield of \$745,700. This means that a dissemination program funded at a \$250,000 level will yield a cost-benefit return of \$43,354,998. To make matters simple, every dollar spent will yield \$173.42 in return. A pretty good investment.

As the evidence of an information utilization problem has mounted, the push for new strategies for dissemination and diffusion has come to the forefront. A major challenge to education has become the development of strategies to encourage and facilitate the adoption or adaption of educational innovations. Leadership in this continuing effort can and should come from state education agencies with their direct organizational ties to most segments of the educational community.

Section II: Dissemination and Diffusion and How They Relate to the Role of the Unit

In most educational organizations the terms dissemination, diffusion, public relations, and public information are used in so many ways, and are bandied about in such situations and manners, as to make them almost synonymous. The unfortunate happenstance is that because the terms are used interchangeably there has been a "semantic delusion" develop that the activities defined by the terms are the same.

As Kester and Hull (1973) have noted, a great deal has been prepared and written in the area of the diffusion of innovations. Books by Havelock (1969, 1973), Rogers (1962), Todd and Kibler (1975), Rogers and Shoemaker (1971), and others have summarized numerous publications which have addressed the topic of innovation diffusion from several perspectives. The definitions of dissemination and diffusion proposed by the Unit for Dissemination are in the main taken from the National Association of State Advisory Council Chairmen (NASACC) and their publication Sharing Educational Success (1974).

Diffusion is defined within the confines of the program as the process by which an innovative practice or a solution

to a problem is spread from the field test to its ultimate users or adopters. Diffusion involves, then, the following management activities: information acquisition and storage; information retrieval; awareness and interest activities; trial assistance; installation assistance; institutionalization; and evaluation.

The Unit defines dissemination as the act of creating an awareness of, or interest in, selected programs (i.e. innovative practices that are solutions to needs or problems) among identified audiences so that they might be brought to trial or installation. The operational words, one notices, are "awareness" and "interest."

Diffusion is, then, within the context of the Unit for Dissemination's program, a much larger concept than dissemination and requires more planning, greater allocation of organizational resources, and Department-wide program coordination to be effective.

The Unit's conception of diffusion--with dissemination being an awareness-interest stage in a process involving various other programs and activities--is remarkably similar to several other models of information management and communication (Sims, 1976).

The Department's wish should be to diffuse innovations, but by the very nature of the diffusion process they must first be disseminated: this is the role of the Unit for Dissemination.

Additionally, it should be understood that this role is significantly different from roles generally subsumed under the headings Public Information and Public Relations (PI/PR).

As most of us would agree, many times the attitudes of society can impact on the educational program and impede or hasten the diffusion of an innovation. Specialists in dissemination usually speak of the "actors" in the field which affect the diffusion of an innovation, many times forgetting that the chief "actors" in the drama may not be educators at all.

Problems which have arisen with Man, A Course of Study evidence the difficulties which arise because of external factors influencing the diffusion process (Turnbull, et al, 1974). This does not, however, make the dissemination program a part of the PI/PR program, nor necessarily PI/PR part of dissemination.

For this reason the Unit has established, for discussion purposes, operational definitions of Public Relations and Public Information:

--Public Information: Communication which tends to refer to an informing of the public without regard to the effect which it might have.

--Public Relations: Communication which tends to refer to a process which has as its basis persuasion and the molding of opinion.

The reader will note that neither definition specifies:

- a) the creation of interest in specific innovative programs;
- b) the existence of solutions to needs or problems; c) the identification of specific audiences of professional educators;
- or, d) the intent of the process to bring about the trial or installation of an innovation.

Communication which meets these criteria would be said to fall under the heading of "dissemination."

This rather specialized interpretation of dissemination has grown out of the Unit's concern over the problems outlined in Section I of this paper and the general absence of coordinated systems to solve it. It reflects the stress placed by a great many educators and communication theorists, on the planning, coordination, and sequential arrangement of related information flow and diffusion strategies. The definition of dissemination and diffusion we have selected serves to demonstrate the inseparability of the functions in accelerating the awareness and ultimate adoption of new educational programs and practices. As a result, it is probably the most appropriate description of what is or should be happening in educational dissemination.

In the Kentucky State Department of Education, as in most state departments, the responsibility for diffusion, as defined by the NASACC, rests with almost all organizational units. Diffusion and ultimate adoption cannot, then, be said to be the sole responsibility of any one division or unit.

The Unit for Dissemination, in the Office of Communication Services, has the responsibility for the creation of a system which facilitates, supports, and aids in the diffusion process by creating awareness for, and interest in, educational innovations.

Section III: Overview of Unit Purpose and Goals

The Unit for Dissemination has as its primary purpose the improvement of educational programs, services, and activities through the provision of information on innovations being developed or tested in Kentucky and elsewhere. In addition, activities must be conducted to create an atmosphere conducive to acceptance of innovation, to develop a clientel of educators capable of employing specific innovations, and to relate concerns to researchers and decision-makers.

Through a linkage and local dissemination capacity building program, it is hoped that decisions at all levels of education in Kentucky can be made by individuals who have or can obtain a broad base of information relevant to those choices.

When fully operational, the dissemination system coordinated through the Unit should serve to:

1. Provide communication linkage among the various diffusion efforts carried out by the Department's bureaus, offices and divisions, facilitating the sharing of resources and effect among these units;
2. Provide supporting services and technical assistance for diffusion efforts;
3. Provide coordination for the dissemination component of any diffusion effort in designated priority areas;
4. Organize, maintain and implement a program of awareness and interest for innovative programs which will impact on local school districts;

5. Create a statewide linkage system designed to aid in the dissemination process;
6. Encourage and aid in the development of plans and activities for the dissemination of innovations produced by research, development or exemplary projects funded through the Kentucky Department of Education;
7. Promote research and development in the areas of dissemination and diffusion; and
8. Develop a program which will encourage use of innovation in the implementation of all educational programs, services and activities.

As outlined, the Unit's relationship with other participants in the total Departmental diffusion effort is a facilitating one. Much of the functioning of the Unit will, therefore, be determined by the activities and policies of the various bureaus, offices and divisions of the Department.

For example, given the management activities of the diffusion process which we discussed in Section II, one might visualize an effort breakdown for the Department much like the one on the following page.

The relationships established between the Unit for Dissemination, the Staff Development Unit, of the Office of Research and Planning (ORP), the program development divisions and the information and innovation producers, in the Department is of particular importance in creating an effective diffusion system.

Program development divisions are generally responsible for providing consultation to local education agencies and to regional consortia personnel in the many facets of the general education program, and for keeping abreast of new trends and changes in all subject areas of the curriculum. The Division

CHART 1

DIFFUSION EFFORT BY ACTIVITY AND UNIT

Information Production	Information Acquisition and Storage	Information Retrieval	Awareness and Interest (Dissemination)	Trial Assistance	Installation Assistance	Institutionalization	Evaluation
--Curriculum Development Centers --Research and Development Related Programs --Other Innovation Producers with the Department	--Materials Center, OCS	--Information Retrieval, Unit for Dissemination, OCS	--Linkage Services Unit for Dissemination, OCS	--NDN Proj. --Staff Development Unit, ORP --Unit for Dissemination, OCS	--Program Development and Supporting Services Divisions --Staff Development Unit, ORP	--State and local boards --Division of Publications, OCS --Finance and Fiscal Control --Certification	--Unit for Evaluation, ORP

OCS - Office of Communication Services
ORP - Office of Research and Planning
NDN - National Diffusion Network

of Program Development in the Bureau of Instruction is also responsible for producing publications to meet the identified needs of Kentucky schools.

The responsibilities of these divisions span the full range of the diffusion continuum, as noted above, from a limited responsibility for creating awareness and interest in an innovation or program change to larger responsibilities for supplementing knowledge of an innovation for evaluation purposes, facilitating trial, and encouraging and facilitating adoption.

Many of the program goals identified by the Unit for Dissemination are designed to support program developers in their efforts to perform these basic functions and to aid them in coordinating their efforts with others of a similar nature taking place within the Department. Thus, while the Unit for Dissemination should be aware of all dissemination activities and involved in them, basic responsibility for the diffusion of innovations during the information production, installation assistance and institutionalization phases remains with the program development divisions.

There should, however, be additional diffusion efforts, of interest to all bureaus, initiated by or coordinated through the Unit for Dissemination.* For these areas of concern the Unit would have planning and implementation responsibilities, even though the curriculum and program development divisions would

* An example of such an innovation would be the dissemination and diffusion process and program itself.

retain responsibility when an indepth knowledge of curriculum development and program implementation was required. The Unit for Dissemination would again be responsible when support services and their coordination were needed.

Additional aid in the trial and installation phases of the process would be provided through the Unit by the Area Dissemination Coordinators and the Local Linkage Teams (See Section IV). Wherever possible, a unified program mounted in concert by all of the units identified in Chart 1 would be encouraged, facilitated, and at times coordinated by the Unit for Dissemination.

The Unit for Dissemination intends, through this approach, to preserve the autonomy of the various organizational units in regard to the diffusion of innovations, while at the same time meeting the need outlined in Section I for dissemination efforts in the Department to be coordinated so that we can meet the needs of our client groups.

Moreover, through this close coordination, we ensure a continuity between information flow and trial and installation which is vital to the achievement of innovation adoption.

Section IV: The Dissemination Network

In order to maximize the communication of information designed to aid teachers and administrators in improving educational programs and practices, a dissemination network is being established which should enable the Department to identify, analyze, and access all client audiences with program-related information. The network should also allow the Unit to receive feedback from these audiences on both the effectiveness of our efforts and the perceived needs of educators in the field.

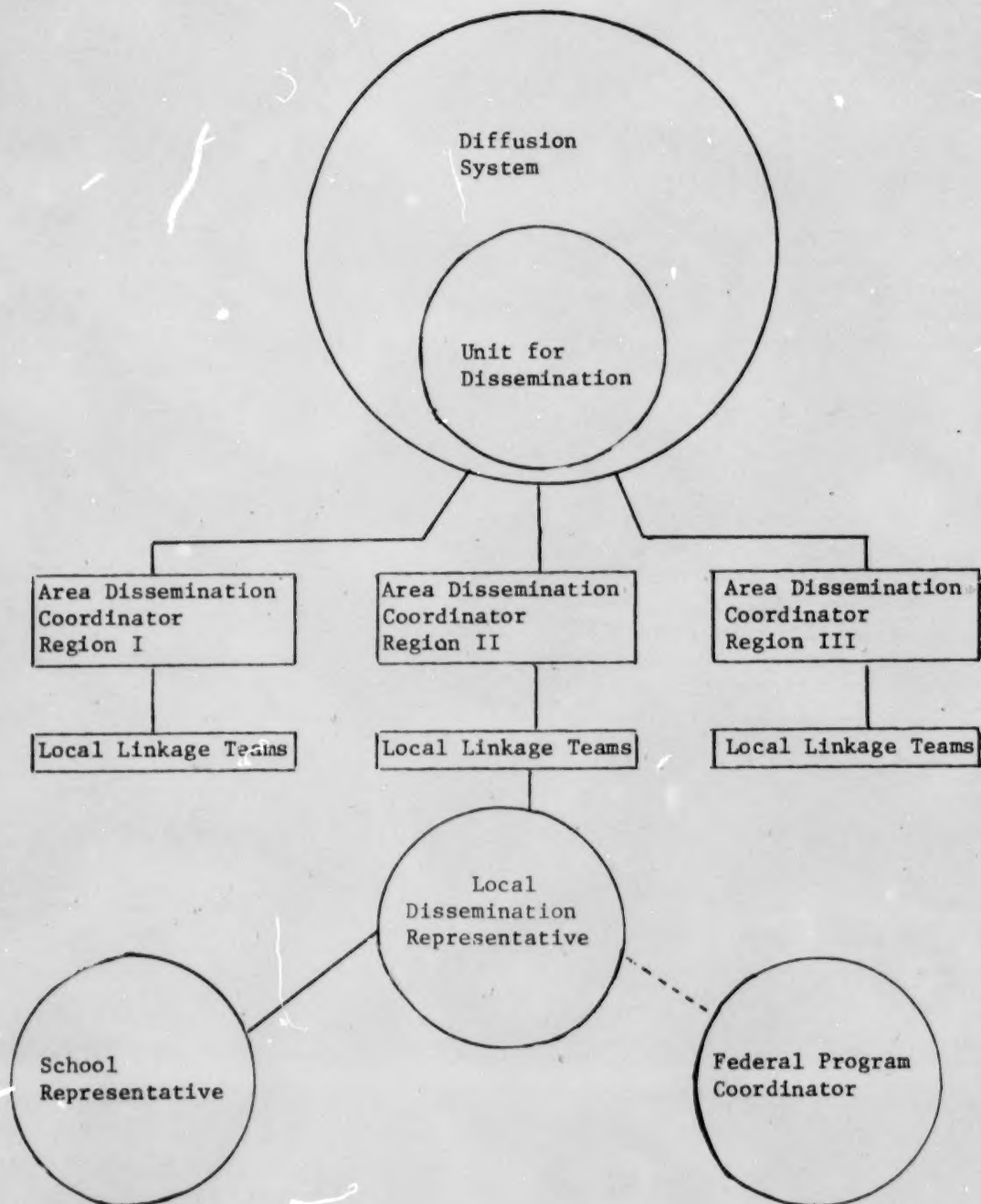
Chart II, on the following page, depicts an organizational structure for the network.

The Unit has established three Area Dissemination Coordinators who are geographically located (see Chart III) and whose responsibilities include the activation and inservice of local linkage teams, the coordination of the flow of educational program and practice-related information to the linkage teams, the provision of supporting information and activities when necessary, and the encouragement and support of the use of educational innovations in the region.

These Coordinators work directly with Local Linkage Teams made up of: the local dissemination representative (selected by the local school superintendent); the school linkage

CHART II

THE DISSEMINATION NETWORK



representatives (usually the school librarians); and, when applicable, the federal program coordinator or similar staff person. The Coordinator works with this team, and other interested local staff, to meet their program information needs, to create awareness for new practices, to identify potential change agents, and to encourage an openness for change.

The Local Dissemination Representative has much the same responsibilities on the local level as the Area Coordinator has for the region. Additionally, the Local Linkage Team has the responsibility of identifying educational innovations which are developed on the local level and passing this information on to the Unit for communication to other Linkage Teams.

Through this extended communication network, it is the Unit's intent to provide a "pipeline" for the transmission of information directly to the local teacher or school administrator. We are able to have a dissemination representative directly in the district, who, through continuing inservice, will develop the expertise to identify problems which can be solved through the proper utilization of educational innovation as well as encourage the use of information related to program improvement. Finally, through the Linkage Team format, we can obtain feedback on: the effectiveness of our diffusion efforts; additional needs and concerns; and programs, initiated at the local or regional level, that have implications for wider use or testing.

The entire network is currently open to all units of the Department upon consultation with the Unit for Dissemination.

It is the Unit's intent to make the network open to these units with, or without, consultation once the capacity of the Linkage Teams to effectively operate on their own has been developed.

The capacity of a Local Linkage Team to serve the information needs of its client population--that is, provide the best available knowledge applicable to an educator's problem--depends on that team's ability to marshal a comprehensive body of information about education knowledge, to put relevant knowledge into the hands of people who can apply it, and to provide the leadership necessary to maintain an effective local awareness program. While Local Linkage Teams are presently active, their efforts hardly begin to surmount the difficulties which would be raised by opening the linkage network to "all comers."

One important key to increasing the utilization of good educational practices within the Commonwealth is the local school district, both because it is the level of local government administratively responsible for education, and because local districts have a service role with respect to their client schools. The Unit's local capacity building effort is concerned with developing effective intermediaries that can link the local educator to local, state, and national information sources, while providing information resources in locations physically close to potential users. The intent of the Unit's dissemination program is to improve knowledge utilization on many levels by: decentralizing the information request and utilization base (shift from state hegemony to local operation); centralizing and organizing a regular communication network; and using the capacity

of the many functional units of the State Department to insure the diffusion of successful innovations.

Section V: The Unit's Structure and Support Functions

The dissemination network discussed in Section IV will only be successful if proper administrative and program support are offered the Teams in the field. An effective dissemination program utilizing the linkage team must include activities and materials designed to: create awareness of new practices, programs, and products; provide information and experiences necessary for the proper development and capacity building of the Teams; and create contact with those units of the State Department who will facilitate trial and adoption. The program must also, of course, provide a feedback loop for evaluation and redirection purposes.

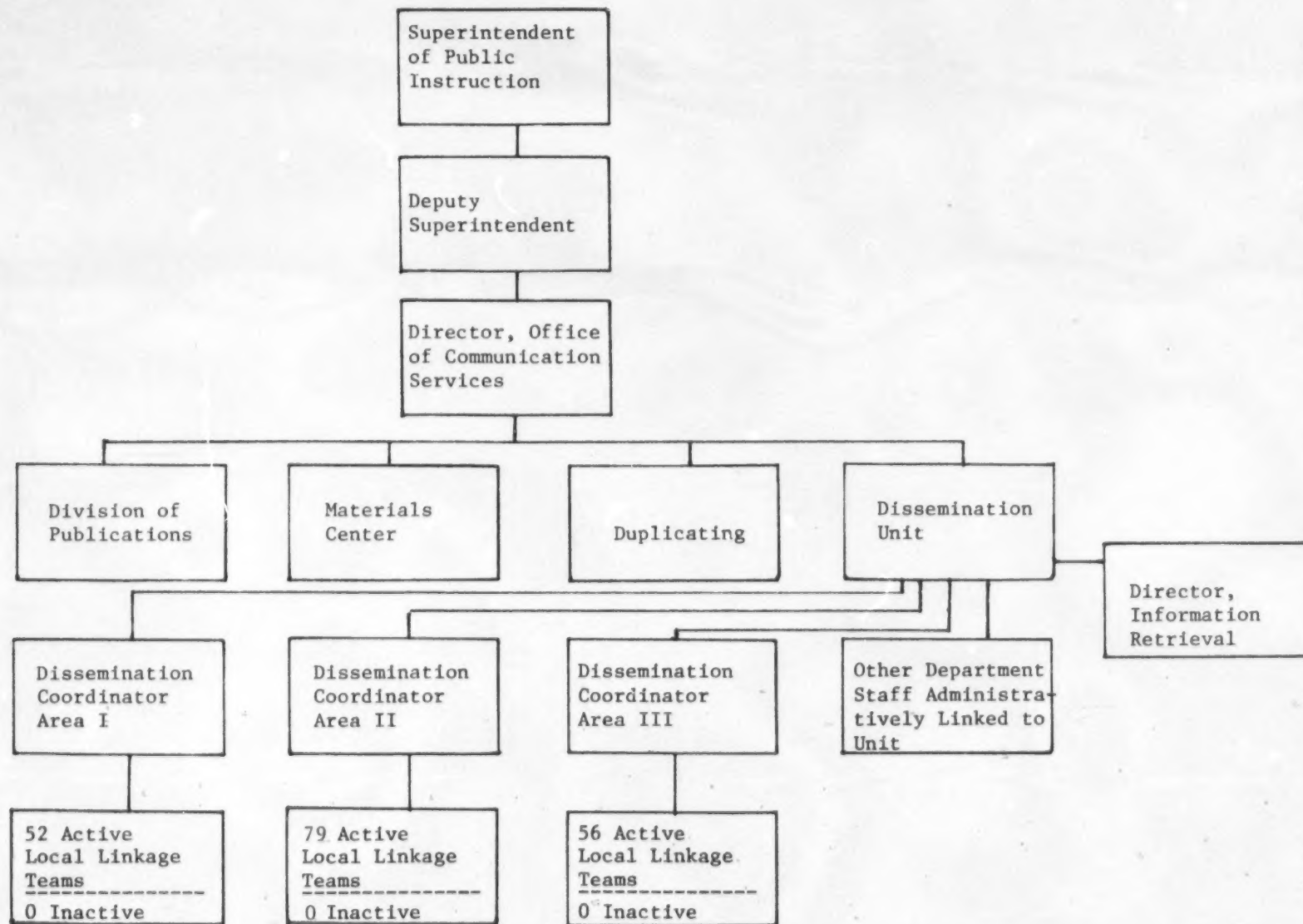
As we have noted, these services to the network are made available to the Teams through the Office of Communication Services' Unit for Dissemination. The structure of the Office and the Unit is shown in Chart IV.

Certain ancillary administrative programs and projects also are attached to the Office which have impact on the dissemination program. These are shown in Chart V and include:

1. Federally funded projects of a dissemination or diffusion nature (e.g. NIE Capacity Building Project)
2. A Departmental Council on Dissemination (Used to coordinate the diffusion process within the Department, the Council is

CHART IV

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATION SERVICES AND ITS UNIT FOR DISSEMINATION



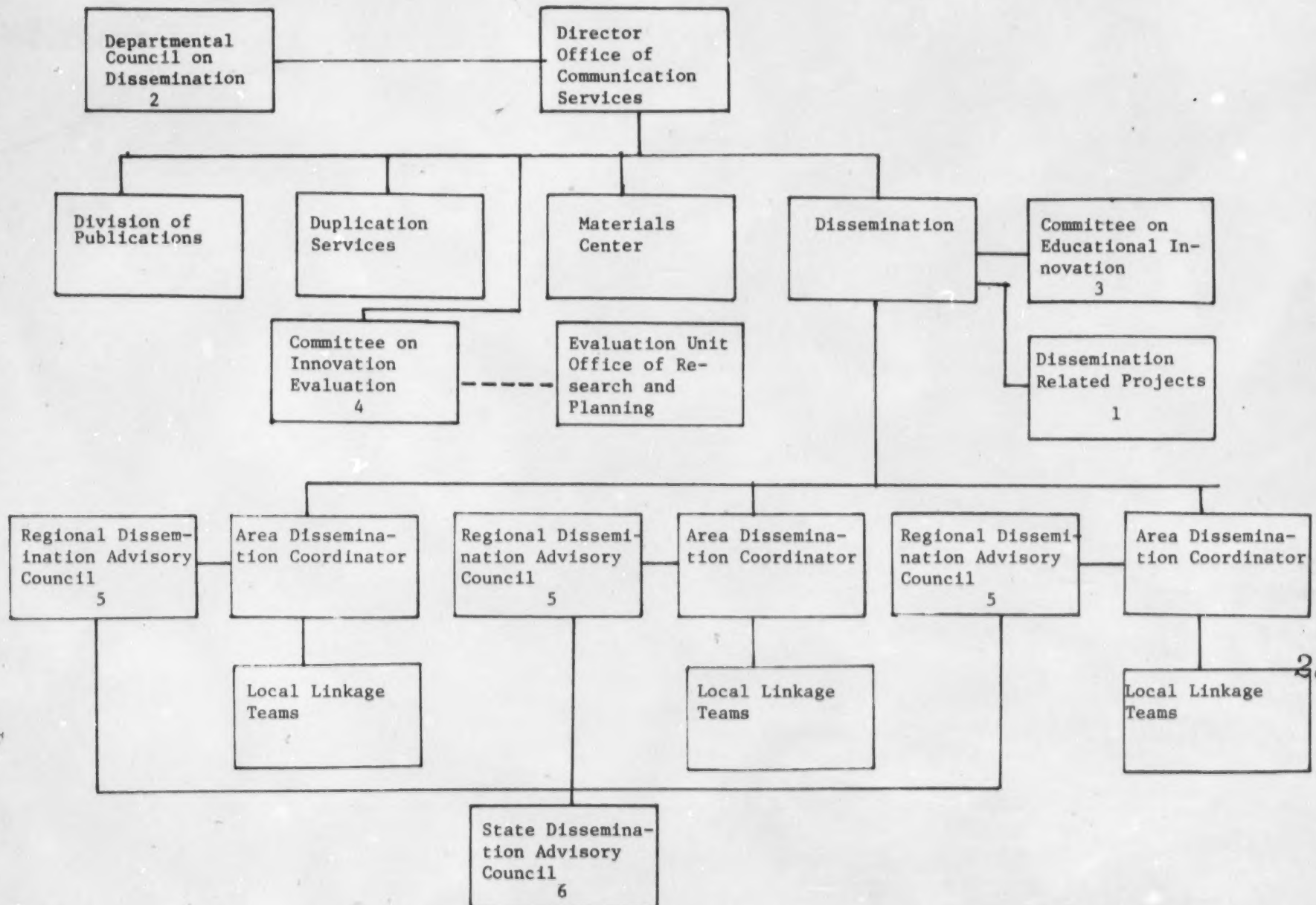
made up of: the Head of the Office of Communication Services; the Director of the Unit for Dissemination; the Director of the Office of Research and Planning; a representative of the Assistant Superintendent for the Bureau of Instruction; a representative of the Assistant Superintendent for the Bureau of Vocational Education; a representative of the Assistant Superintendent for the Bureau of Exceptional Children; a representative of the Assistant Superintendent for the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services)

3. A Committee on Educational Innovation (numerous researchers have noted that successful dissemination is directly related to the early involvement of the dissemination component and the client audience in the innovation process. This Committee is intended to provide such input and consists of: the Director of the Unit for Dissemination; the Director of the Unit for Research, Office of Research and Planning; the Director of the Unit for Staff Development, Office of Research and Planning; two representatives of the research and development community; two representatives of local teachers; one representative of parents; and one representative of students. The Head of the Office of Communication Services serves ex officio).
4. A Committee on Innovation Evaluation. (Established as a subcomponent of the Unit for Evaluation, Office of Research and Planning, the members are selected by the director of that unit. This Committee serves to evaluate innovative programs which are submitted for inclusion in the Dissemination program's Important People/Important Programs (IPs) innovative program file.)
5. Regional Dissemination Advisory Councils. (Established by the Area Coordinators, these Councils are made up of a select number of the members of Local Linkage Teams who serve voluntarily. Their charge is to aid the Area Coordinator in program planning for the Linkage Teams in that area.)
6. State Dissemination Advisory Council. (Established by the Regional Dissemination Advisory Councils, this Council is made up of two representatives from each Council. Their charge is to aid in program policy development and planning.

Activities established by the Unit were developed based upon the goals described in Section III and taking into account several administrative presumptions:

- A. The program should be organized in such a way as to allow for transformation and feedback.

CHART V
DISSEMINATION PROGRAM ANCILLARIES



- B. The program should be administered in such a way as to overcome natural system entropy and control bureaucratic inertia.
- C. The program should take into account the limits placed on communication resources (time, money, manpower).
- D. The program should employ a "media mix" which will insure impact and proper message redundancy.
- E. The program should insure that it is based upon a systematic approach to message transmission with adequate movement to proactivity and "downstreaming".
- F. The program should insure that the capacity of the communication network is such that information passed over the network can be used.
- G. The program should insure linkage with the innovation producers as well as the information users.

Tasks have been divided among six administrative subcomponents:

1. Provide for a program of linkage within the Kentucky Department of Education which will bring together the various components of the diffusion system.
2. Provide for a program of linkage within the state which will develop the dissemination capacity of local school districts as well as provide leadership for local dissemination efforts.
3. Develop a regular program of awareness and interest activities which will insure the dissemination of selected innovations as well as promote and encourage the use of educational innovations.
4. Provide technical assistance for Departmental diffusion efforts as well as encourage and aid in the dissemination of research and development project results.
5. Promote research and development on dissemination and the diffusion process.

Tasks are arranged within the subcomponents as follows:

Subcomponent 1--Departmental Internal Linkage

Tasks:

- a. Establishment of the Departmental Council on Dissemination.
- b. Establishment of Committee on Innovation Evaluation through the Evaluation Unit.
- c. Plan and conduct a two day conference on diffusion for selected departmental personnel.
- d. Coordinate the production and distribution of Classroom Innovations.
- e. Establish, organize and sponsor a series of Departmental Mini-Conferences on innovations of interest to Department staff.

Subcomponent 2--State Linkage Program and Local Capacity Building

Tasks:

- a. Continuation and Supervision of three Dissemination Coordinators organized to work with local linkage teams to build local dissemination capacity.
- b. Continuation of the development of the linkage team concept in all of Kentucky's local school districts.
- c. Development of Local Linkage Training Packages which can be used to inservice and build the capacity of the Local Linkage Teams.
- d. Planning and conduct of a series of three regional workshops for Local Linkage Representatives.
- e. Planning and conduct of a series of Departmental Mini-Conferences on diffusion for Local Linkage Teams.
- f. Development, production and distribution of regular dissemination related information designed for the Local Linkage Team.
- g. Development, production and distribution of Catalyst, occasional papers offering strategic advice on diffusion to Local Linkage Teams.

Subcomponent 3--Departmental Awareness and Interest Program

Tasks:

- a. Update the promising programs and practices file to provide a current reference and source material for the Important People/Important Programs (IPs) resource package.
- b. Assist in the development, production and distribution of Patchwork a monthly resource document for Kentucky's schools.
- c. Development, production and distribution of the Journal of Educational Research and Development, a journal on and about innovations.
- d. Establish, organize and sponsor a series of Departmental Mini-Conferences on selected educational innovations of interest to Kentucky educators.
- e. Conduct activities necessary to publicize and promote the use of the information request and linkage network services, and provide orientation materials and information for visitors from other SEAs by:
 1. development of an information brochure
 2. development of a program flyer
 3. development of a slide-tape program
 4. development of an awareness display

Subcomponent 4--Provide Technical Assistance and Aid in the Dissemination of Research and Development Project Results

Tasks:

- a. Review Department sponsored project proposals to insure the proper development of project dissemination plans.
- b. Work through the Dissemination Coordinating Council to insure that any necessary assistance is provided.
- c. Establish and coordinate the Committee on Educational Innovations.

Subcomponent 5--Promote Dissemination and Diffusion Research and Development

Tasks:

- a. Make the research and development community aware of the needs in this area.

- b. Assist in the conduct of research and development projects on the dissemination and diffusion process.
- c. Assemble data of interest to the research and development community.
- d. Plan and conduct a Departmental Mini-Conference on diffusion and dissemination.

Section VI: Conclusion

It has been said that the greatest economic waste in journalism is the unread word. If this is true, then the greatest economic waste in research and development is unused innovation.

At the present time the various Bureaus and Offices within the Kentucky Department of Education are each spending about \$122,000 on dissemination related activities.* We have no estimate of funds expended in the Department to produce knowledge or develop innovations, but this expenditure is undoubtedly significant and is probably larger than the amount spent on dissemination by a factor of ten. For example: the Resources Development Unit in the Bureau of Vocational Education funded research, development and exemplary projects in the amount of \$2,246,630 between 1969 and 1976. Of this amount, \$174,938 was for projects listed as being of a "dissemination" nature (McCaslin, et al, 1976). However, only \$12,000 of this amount was spent on projects which could be described as "dissemination" as the term is used in this paper. That \$12,000, then, represents only .005% of the total expended for information production over a five-year period by this one unit of the Department. This one example is sufficiently striking and it seems unnecessary to cite any more.

* 1976 figures: \$122,051

The Unit for Dissemination believes that it is feasible to develop general information diffusion models around which programs and activities can be planned. In the past the diffusion of innovations by the Department was accomplished on a "piecemeal" basis usually in reaction to a problem which had already existed long enough to be entrenched.

The program described above suggests a flexibility which allows for a structuring of the dissemination component in the diffusion process. It suggests ways in which the tendency toward piecemeal problem-solution can be reduced at the awareness/interest level, and ways in which pro-activity can be designed into the system through the Local Linkage Team.

The general bias of administrators is to not develop regular communication channels because of the fear that communication message flexibility will not be enhanced. The Unit for Dissemination's program suggests that flexibility can be built into a structured system.

No instructional program can exist if it does not change. Without the vitality which successful innovations bring to the educational system, the system would surely show a decrease in its effectiveness. It is up to the Unit for Dissemination to insure that a system exists to get the correct information to decision makers in the right shape at the right time.

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